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[Ancient Georgia]

565 423 621 ownership of land was unknown. Immovable properties belonged to the *gvari* as a whole and the oldest member of it, the *mamasakhlisi*, was its sole regulator and manager. *Gvari* or *sakhli* then represented a basic social group welded by common descent, common ownership and communal production; in other words ancient Georgia did not know a 592 621 social economic unit smaller than the *gvari*. This however, does not mean that there were no family households. The household or family as a biological and moral union did of course exist, but juridically and economically it formed an inseparable part of the *gvari*. Families could and did naturally live in separate homes, but socially they were very closely bound to their respective *gvarni* outside of which they had no legal existence. The *gvari* and *sagvareulo* system was the keystone of all social life. Hamlets, villages and towns were organized in accordance with this system, for in the majority of cases the whole village was held in a single *sagvareulo*. This system lasted until the seventh century A.D., and in some cases survived until the thirteenth century; while among the mountaineers of the Aragvi and the Ksani valleys, it persisted till as recently as the eighteenth century.

178 61, With the invasion of the Romans in 65 B.C. and the subsequent imposition of a "treaty of friendship" on Iberia, this native system of state and social organization became increasingly subject to external influences. The Romans interfered frequently, for instance, with the succession rights with a view to placing their own creatures on the Iberian throne; but the older practices proved strong enough to persist until the end of the second century A.D. when succession by primogeniture became the rule.

178 554 Other modifications began to take place. Differences in social status gradually developed within the *gvarni* and by the middle of the second century A.D. social inequalities had become already, at least partially, established.

554 The first foreign writer to allude to the existence of social inequality in Georgia was Dio Cassius who lived in the second half of the second century A.D. In giving an account of the arrival in Rome of Farsman II (A.D. 116–40) King of Iberia, and of the reception accorded him by the Emperor Hadrian, Dio Cassius states that

> "the Emperor watched Farsman and the sons of other *illustrious* Iberians perform tournaments". [1]

[1] Dio Cassius, *Hist. Romana*, III, 69.

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[Ancient Georgia]

FROM THE CLAN TO THE CLASS

In the Greek text Cassius uses the word *protos*; now *protos*, which means literally "the first", "the illustrious", is rendered by the Georgian translators of the Greek by the word *aznauri*.[1] It was *aznaurni* then who composed the suite of Farsman II. The word *aznauri*, of which *aznaurni* is the plural form, comes from the Perso-Armenian root *azn* formed with the suffix *ur* = *ver*, that is *azna-uri* = *azna-veri*, wherein *azn*, according to Prof. Marr, denotes birth, origin, descent, and *ur* = *ver* = son.[2] *Aznauri* thus means "son of birth"—in other words, "son of illustrious birth or origin". The Georgian equivalent of *aznauri* is *gvarishvili* = son of *gvari*; also *gvarovani* or *gvariani*, of illustrious *gvari* or clan. The *Protoi Iberôn* of Cassius and the *aznaurni* or *gvarianni*, *gvarishvilni*, of the Georgians all have then one and the same meaning, the only difference between the two Georgian words *aznauri* and *gvariani* being in this, that the first is formed from a foreign and the second from a purely Georgian root.

If *aznauri* denoted the person or the rank of persons, of high, illustrious birth, there can be no doubt that there must have been some denomination of the persons or rank of persons of lower, less illustrious birth. We can find no indication of this in Dio Cassius' work, since he makes reference only to the *aznaurni* in Farsman's suite. There are no Georgian sources for the same period. But in later Georgian monuments, the earliest of which belongs to the fifth century, namely, *The Martyrdom of St. Shushaniki the Queen*, we are provided with valuable retrospective light; in it we find that the population of Georgia was divided in the fifth century into *aznaurni* and *uaznoni*.[3]

Uazno, of which *uaznoni* is the plural form, is the negative form of *aznauri* and consequently means of non-illustrious or of low birth, literally birthless, without birth. The *uaznoni* or *ugvaroni*, that is the people who were without *gvari*, who did not belong to a *gvari*, were of no consequence at all, since they possessed no *gvari* to uphold them. An *aznauri* or *gvariani*, a *gvarishvili*, on the contrary, because he belonged to a *gvari* could feel himself assured of his personal independence. The social state is, as Professor Javakhishvili has correctly observed, "perfectly reflected" in the term itself used to designate the "members of privileged *gvarni*"—in the word

[1] Translation of St. Mark's Gospel, VI, 21. That *protoi* must designate *aznaurni* was first suggested by the Georgian Professor Javakhishvili; see his *Gasuliarstvennie stroi drevniai Gruzii i drevniai Armenii* (Spb. 1905).

[2] N. Marr, *Tek. Raz. A-G*, Book IV.

[3] Cf. J. M. Sabinini, *Sakartvelos Samotkhi* (*The Paradise of Georgia*), Spb. 1882, p. 191.

[Ancient Georgia]

554 565 *aznauri* which etymologically has the meaning of "son of *gvari*", *gvarishvili*, but was also used in the sense of "the free".

Aznauri, then, meant also free or *tavisupali* in Georgian, and in this sense it was used in ancient Georgian literature, particularly in the translations of the Scriptures. Etymologically *tavisupali* means "lord" or "master of self"; consequently *tavisupali* was he who was his own master; who had no overlord; and was independent.

In like manner *mazno* was he who was not his own master; and was not independent.

565 From the earliest Georgian literary document mentioned above we learn that in the fifth century there existed in Georgia *aznaurni-did-didni*, that is the "great *aznaurni*".[1] Though it is not mentioned in our source, there can be no doubt that in contradistinction to the "great *aznaurni*" there existed also the "small *aznaurni*" or *aznaurni mtsireni*, otherwise the qualification of *aznaurni* as *did-didni*, the great, would have no sense whatever. *Aznaurni* then were already differentiated in

the fifth century. A better definition and a more complicated gradation of the *aznaurni* may have existed in the fifth century itself, but we possess no definite information on this point. From the same above-mentioned document we learn also that in the fifth century differentiation was not only shown in the *aznaurni* but also in the *mazroni*. Thus while in the first century A.D. social inequality was almost unknown in Georgia, no one except the royal *gvari* having the right to possess bondsmen, in the fifth century A.D. inequality had become the very essence of social life, and the population was divided

[1] Sebinini, *Sabrdzolo Samotkhi*.

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[Medieval Georgia]

CHAPTER XX

THE MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASSES IN MEDIÆVAL GEORGIA

565 554 *Msakhurni* constituted a distinct social group, although the different categories within the group did not enjoy equal rights and an equal social position; they also, like the *aznaurni*, were differentiated. According to *The Life of St. Abo*,[1] an eighth-century document, a *msakhuri* was a person attached to another, his master, for whom he performed certain duties. It follows then that *msakhurni*, of which *msakhuri* is the singular form, and the etymological meaning of which is "the servant", were attached to the kings and to the *mtavarni* and *aznaurni*. St. Abo, for instance, was in the service of Nersé, the *eristavt-eristavi*, in the capacity of "a skilled blender of face-creams, powders and scents". Another particular and special duty of a *msakhuri* is preserved in *The Life of Serapion Zarzmeli*—namely, that of a courier or messenger.[2] The *msakhurni* of the kings and of the *mtavarni* constituted a group of higher social standing than the *msakhurni* of the *aznaurni*. In like manner the *msakhurni* of the great *aznaurni* enjoyed a higher social status than those of the small or common *aznaurni*. Unfortunately the Georgian historical sources do not contain detailed information about the grades of *msakhurni*. Two grades, however, are mentioned casually, namely, *mtavris dsinashe mdgomelni*[3] and *tadzreulni*.[4] Although it is difficult to glean the nature of the offices held by these *msakhurni*, it is clear, judging from the meaning of the qualifying terms, that their duties put them in close contact with the *mtavarni* and the palace, for the first term strictly signifies "the before mtavari standing", and the second "of the palace".

[1] It was written by Ioanné Sabinisdze. See German translation by K. Schultze, *Das Martyrium des heiligen Abo von Tiflis*, in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, XIII, 4, 315, 27–8. Abo was martyred in 785. See also *Sakartvelos Samotkhi*, p. 338.

[2] *Tzkhovrebai da Mokhmedebai. . . . Serapionisi* (*Life and Activities of Serapion*), published by M. Janashvili in his *Georgian Literature*, Book II.

[3] See *Tzkhovrebai Grigol Khandztelisai* (*Life of St. Grigol of Khandzti*), by Merchuli, published by N. Marr in *Tek. Raz. A-G.*, Book VII, page 16, Cap. XI.

[4] See *Tzkhovrebai Mepisa Wakhtang Gorgasalisai* (*Life of the King Wakhtang Gorgasali*), by Juansheri, published by E. Takaishvili, p. 209.

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[Medieval Georgia]

THE MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASSES

With the growth of a strong central power and the development of the mediæval administrative machine people began to be distinguished not only by their birth, but also by the service they rendered to the state. *Gvarishvilni* so distinguished became known as *msakhureulni*, which is not to be confused with *msakhurni* mentioned above. A *msakhureuli* (singular) was he who possessed a record of long service to the state. *Msakhureulni gvarishvilni* were thus doubly illustrious by birth and by service.

For a *gvarishvili*, backed by the worth and influence of his *gvari*, it was comparatively easy to enter the administrative service. It was not, however, so easy for the *ugvaroni* or *uaznoni*, who entered upon their career without the advantage of the influence of their *gvari* and all which that implied. The advancement and promotion of an *ugvaro* naturally would not be free of prejudice and unopposed by the *aznaurni*. In such a position undoubtedly were the *msakhurni* of the higher grades. In course of time, however, their personal worth and merit began to be recognized and rewarded. In the work of Juansheri quoted above, it is stated that King Archili "presented Kakheti to his *tadzrèulni* and made *aznaurni* of them".[1]

The promotion and elevation of the *msakhurni* became a frequent occurrence in the tenth and the following centuries, and strong kings such as Bagrat III, David Aghmashenebeli and Giorgi III pursued a policy of favouring poor and capable *msakhurni* at the expense of the proud and turbulent *aznaurni*. The preferment of *msakhurni* to *aznaurni* became increasingly common, and in the time of David Aghmashenebeli there was a whole class of *aznaurni* called *aghzeebulni* ("the raised"). Of this type of *aznaurni* may have been the *mosakargaveni* whose duty was the collection of taxes[2] and the *aznaurni sazuerelni*[3] who were in charge of the Customs Houses.

The elevation of *uaznoni* to *aznauroba* led to a new distinction among the *aznaurni*; henceforward the *aznaurni* who were such by the right of birth, *aznauroba* having been handed down to them by their ancestors, began to be known as *aznaurni memamuleni* or *natesavit aznaurni* in contrast to the *aghzeebulni aznaurni*, i.e. "the raised", those who had acquired their *aznauroba* by bestowment.

[1] Juansheri, pp. 209–10.
[2] *Sbio Mgbvimis Sami Sigeli* (*Three Sigels of Sbio Mgbvime*), published by S. Kakabadze, p. 3.
[3] *Matiane Kartlisai*, published by E. Taqaishvili, p. 230.

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[Historical and Medieval Georgia]

647 635 *mtavari* it is difficult to discern; some provinces were governed by *eristavt-eristavni* and some by *mtavarni*. The office of *eristavt-eristavni* is first mentioned in Georgian documents of the ninth century. A province governed by an *eristavi* was called *saeristavo*, by a *mtavari-samtavro*, and by an *eristavt-eristavi—saeristavt-eristao*.

In the earliest Georgian documents "the country" is called *sopeli*;[1] from the eighth century, however, it is called *kueqana*, in which sense the word is still in use.[2] But anciently *kueqana* denoted not only the whole of the country, and each principal component province of Georgia, such as formed separate kingdoms before the union under the mediæval kings, was called also *kueqana*. Furthermore, the same word was used to designate even the smaller units, the provinces which had never been independent, such as Trialeti, Shavsheti and the like. *Kueqana* could thus mean an administrative unit. At the head of the administration of a large *kueqana* stood an *eristavt-eristavi* and at the head of that of a smaller *kueqana* an *eristavi*.

• [554] *Eristavt-eristavni* did not enjoy complete equality. Their greatness depended on the importance of the provinces which they administered. Those who governed provinces that had been independent kingdoms before the unification of Georgia were held in greater honour and respect. Such *eristavt-eristavni* were known in the words of the mediæval Georgian historians as "holders of kings' seats". The historian of Queen Tamara mentions two such "holders of kings' seats" one of whom was Guzani, Lord of Klarjeti and Shavsheti, "whom the King had elevated to the seat of the Tao(khi)an kings".[3] The "holders of kings' seats" were in all probability more than two, since Georgia before the unification had consisted of a number of separate kingdoms.

According to the author of *The Life of Serapion Zarzmeli*, an *eristavi* was "lord and master of the places and holder of everything therein".[4] According to another document called *Dzegli Eristavta—The Monument of the Eristavni* (of the Ksani) the duties of an *eristavi* included the "administration of churches, service to the King and government of the province".[5] "Largweli when appointed *Eristavi*, received these seven *Khevni* for administration, the churches and every *aznauri* domiciled therein."[6] From these extracts it is

[1] The present-day meaning of *sopeli* is "the village", which formerly was called *dabo*; the present-day meaning of the latter is "the small town".
[2] *Kueqana* = *Kue qana* = stone field.
[3] See *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 434
[4] *Tzkhov. Serap. Zarzmelisai*, pp. 10–11.
[5] *Kronikebi*, II, 4.
[6] *Ibid.*

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[Medieval Sesiya]

647 *Sakartuelosani* and *Kartuelni*. *Tavadni* were found not only at the head of state institutions but also at the head of cities and towns; Abulasan mentioned above was one such *tavadi* of Tpilisi (Tiflis). In *The Life of David Aghmashenebeli* we read that "there arrived the learned from among the Anelian *tavadni* (of Ani) and informed King David of their decision to hand over to him the town and the fortresses" (*ibid.*, p. 311). It should be noted that the term is used in the plural, which shows that there was more than one *tavadi* at the head of the town of Ani.

We have inquired above who and what were *mkvidrni*. Compared with *tavadni* there existed, according to Professor Javakhishvili, this difference, that *mkvidri* was a term expressing a wider notion and denoting a comparatively numerous and variegated circle, while *tavadi* was the appellation of a member of a narrower and more particular group. To the *mkvidri* group belonged not only *didebulni* and *vazirni* as stated above, but also *tavadni* and even the great *vachrni*—merchants. But the *tavadni* were not numerous.

The terms *tavadi* and *didebuli* also were not expressive of an equivalent notion. It may have been, of course, that a *tavadi* was invested with a high office and bore the title of *didebuli*. In such a case he would not be *tavadi* only but *tavadi didebuli*. And indeed *Matiane Kartlisai* mentions "*tavadni didebulni* of this kingdom". But that these two terms did not denote the same thing is proved by the fact that the Georgian Chronographer mentions them separately—"the *tavadni* Kartuelni and *didebulni* gathered together".

647 554 [611] From all that has been said it is clear that *tavadi* was not like *aznauri* a term denoting a social class but a term implying personal worth. A *tavadi* was *tavadi* personally during his lifetime; none of his relations had any right to his title nor could any of them inherit it after his death. The exclusive quality of the rank was preserved long after it had become an hereditary social title, for in the eighteenth century in the list of *didebulni tavadni* in the Code of Laws of Wakhtang VI, we find a definition quoted below, from which it is clear that there could be only one *didebuli tavadi* in any one *gvari*. According to the Code, the following were the *didebulni tavadni*,

> "One head of the undivided (*gvari*) the *Eristavi* of Aragvi himself; one head of the undivided (*gvari*) Amilakhori himself; undivided one head Orbelishvili; and when his (*gvari*) was undivided Tzitzishvili also, and though not with these, has also been the *Meliki* of Somkheti."

[Medieval Georgia]

THE RULING CLASSES

Thus in the Kingdom of Kartli there had only been six *didebulni tavadni*, or "great lords", and they were entitled to the honour in respect of their chieftainship of the six great *gwarni*, and the honour was only due if each could claim to represent an undivided *gwari*. Thus Tzitzishvili ceased to be *didebuli tavadi* when his *gwari* became divided. 647 [554]

The terms *tavadi* and *didebuli* did not express exactly equivalent notions. A *didebuli*, it is true, was like a *tavadi* the son of a great *gwari*, but his *didebuleba* depended essentially on his holding a high office, without which, in spite of his being of great *gwari*, he could not have become a *didebuli*. The case was, however, different with a *tavadi*; his *tavadoba* did not depend in any way upon any state duty; to be a *tavadi* he need not have held a high office; for a *tavadi* it was enough that he was head and chief of a great *gwari*. But if he, at the same time, held a high office, he then became as already stated a *didebuli tavadi*.

[Medieval Georgia]

631 *qaleba* or *dsqaloba* was followed by blessing. Of Zakharia
566 Mkhargrdzeli the Annalists write that the Queen "conferred
423 *dsqaloba* by blessing upon his son, Zakharia, also"; else-
571 where again it is stated that she "*sheidsqalnes* and blessed many other *didebulni* also".[1] Blessing or *dalotsva* on occasion formed part of the ceremony of conferring of every high office.

Those of the lesser *qmani* who showed great zeal, loyalty and devotion were, of course, correspondingly *shedsqalebulni*. If a *qma* who had distinguished himself received such a favour for the first time, he was *shedsqalebuli* by being newly blessed, or if he already held some office, or was entrusted with another duty he was *shedsqalebuli momatebita*, that is "additionally".

• [554] At the time of blessing the beneficiary or *shedsqalebuli* received from his lord ceremonial investiture; for instance, the *Mandaturt-Ukhutsesi* was presented with a gold ferule; the *Amir-Spasalari* received a golden sword. The *eristavni* and *eristavt-eristavni* had a banner each as an ensign which distinguished their office and, although direct information is not available, it is probable that they received this symbol from the King at the time of investiture.

It is not known whether the *shedsqalebuli* took the oath of fealty, but it is certain that at the time of blessing *taqwaneba* —adoration—was laid down as a rule.

631 The holding of lands and provinces was directly connected
554 with the holding of office. The lands or provinces so con-
428 nected with or dependent upon the office held by the *sheds-*
571 *qalebuli* were called *sapatio*, i.e. held in honour.
647 Besides these *sapatio* provinces and lands, the King's "loyal and devoted" state officers also received by way of *shedsqaleba* the so-called *sakharajoni*. *Sakharajo* is derived from *kharaji*, meaning "the tax", and denotes "for *kharaji*"; *sakharajo* towns therefore constituted grants, the taxes from which the beneficiary could divert to his own benefit.

Sakharajo towns, fortresses and villages were granted to *shedsqalebulni* on different conditions, some as *sakutari*, meaning "own", and some as *sanakhevrot*, meaning "for half". *Saku-tari*—own—should not be understood as if the grantee received the towns as his own possessions. The term has no relation to the actual ownership of the places granted; it implies only that the whole of the taxes collected from them were given to the recipient as his own for his own use, while in the case of *sanakhevrot* (for half)—granted towns the grantee

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 442.

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was given the benefit of only half the amount of the taxes collected.

Shedsqaleba thus meant the bestowing of favour by the King or some other *patroni* upon a *qma* by conferring an office or some other exclusive privilege and granting or conceding *sapatio* or *sakharajo* (*sakutarit* or *sanakhevrot*) towns, fortresses, villages and lands.

On occasions a *shedsqalebuli qma* received a heritable grant *mamulobit* or *samamulot*; grants *mamulobit* were conferred both upon the grantee and his descendants.

The terms of *sapatio* and *nadsqalobevi* grants were subject to variation. When a state official was removed from his office, the *sapatio* property, which he held as a perquisite of that office, reverted to the crown, but the King did not always strictly enforce his reversionary rights and occasionally left some of the properties in the family of the former beneficiary. Thus, for instance, when Queen Tamara deprived Qubasar of the office of *Amir-Spasalari*, she took into consideration his "slavish service" to her father, Giorgi III, and "deprived him of nothing except the office and of Lori".[1] Lori constituted, among other places, the *sapatio* property of the *Amir-Spasalari*, and once Qubasar was deprived of the office of *Amir-Spasalari*, Lori also was taken from him, but the remainder of his property—his *didebuli koneba*—the Queen left to him. In like manner when Gamrekeli, the *Amir-Spasalari*, died, because of the services he had rendered, "except Tmogvi, of nothing else were his sons deprived" by command of Tamara.[2]

Sapatio and *nadsqalobevi* property thus tended to become hereditary; the former rarely, but the latter more often. But it is noteworthy, as is evident from later *sigelni*, that neither the property granted *mamulobit* nor that which became in course of time hereditary, was ever considered to be fully and completely the private property of the *shedsqalebuli* or of his descendants. The holders of such properties, although called owners, were not in fact in a position to sell, exchange or donate them without the express permission of the King; only by "consulting" and by "permission" of the *patroni* could they deal in these properties. It follows therefore that the supreme owner of the *mamulobit* (heritable) and *nadsqalobevi* property remained after all the donor-*patroni* himself and not the *shedsqalebuli* or grantee.

According to the degree of *dsqaloba* bestowed, a *qma*

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 406. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 444.